

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, March 1, 1896, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. 1331 Connecticut Avenue, Washington, D. C. Sunday, March 1, 1896. My darling:

I have been writing more invitations for my lunch party and I am afraid I am too tired for much of a letter. My lunch party hangs fire sadly, all the people I especially wanted won't come. Don't think me extravagant in having these two other parties. One is for Harry and the other is to bring me into closer acquaintance with the ladies to whom Elsie must look for her good times next winter. After all there are a great many very pleasant people in society here, people whom I like meeting and with whom I should like to be better acquainted in a quiet way. I think after all if I were a less indolent person I should like going out as much as anybody, not so much for the mere going out, but for the possibilities of power in meeting people and influencing them. But it is true I am lazy and that is the reason why I accomplish so little, although I am seldom idle.

This morning I indulged in staying in bed until twelve! I think it's good for once a week, but oftener would be both stupid and demoralizing. However I wasn't asleep, on the contrary I drew my curtains at half-past seven and read. I am reading Mrs. Oliphant's new book on Rome and find it very interesting in spite of her dreadfully involved and sometimes obscure sentences. I can not help what you say about involved sentences, I am sure I never wrote anything as bad as Mrs. Oliphant's. They irritate even me and the meaning is sometimes so mixed that you have to guess at it. Yet I never read a book that put so clearly before my mind's eyes pictures of the times and men of whom it treats. I almost see the scenes described and the men become for me living human beings for whom I feel it is possible to have a real personal affection and sympathy. Now this is something to achieve. I think I would like her to write your biography, even if some of her sentences did make you turn

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in your grave! She is so sympathetic and shows you how the motives ruling these dreadful awe-inspiring, dry-as-dust old Fathers of the church are the same as ours, mixtures of good and bad, of childlikeness as well as Godlikeness. Geoffrey, the great, becomes not only the Great Papa who first attempted to spread the supremacy of the Sea of Rome over all the world, but the inquiring, inquisitive, friendly old gentleman who sees some strange looking children playing in the streets, asks who they were and makes poems on them, just exactly as you might or any other ordinary mortal. I have heard that story many times but never told in just that human sort of way, and it's all the difference between the living human hand and the horrid skeleton the xrays show you.

I went to Grace's theatre party last night. She looked very handsomely and like Queen Elizabeth even to the red hair as the lavender bonnet she wore threw that tinge on it. We saw "For Fair Virginia", a strong melodrama not adapted to a Southern audience. Charlie said the scanty crowd only applauded when the orchestra played "Dixie". Today is your Father's birthday. I ordered flowers sent out and am going there presently. I hope some of the stale tobacco will get out of my dress between now and then! It hasn't recovered my last visit 3 to you in your room.

Will this reach you on your birthday? Don't think of the added year, but rejoice that you have had one more year in which to do good to the world and make your wife happy.

Lovingly, Mabel.